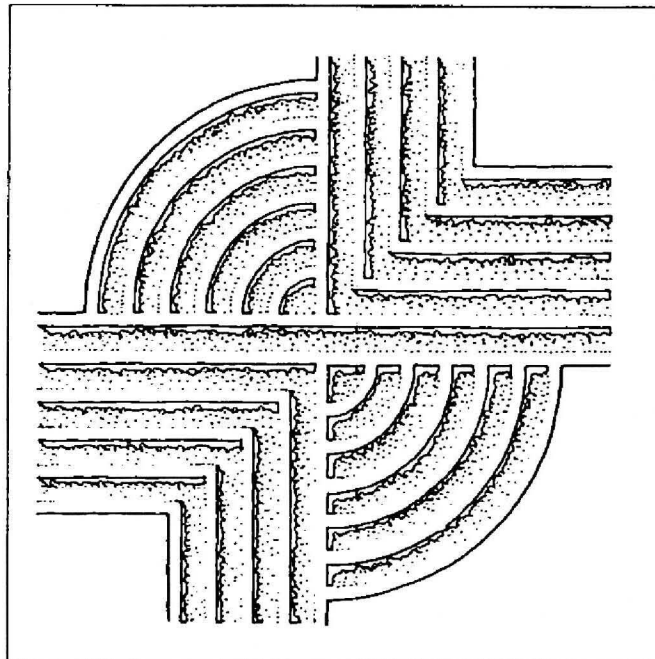


THE MARK CLARK EXPRESSWAY  
NEARLY TWENTY YEARS LATER:  
A RETROSPECTIVE



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**THE MARK CLARK EXPRESSWAY  
NEARLY TWENTY YEARS LATER: A RETROSPECTIVE**

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It was forty years ago, in 1956, that President Eisenhower created the interstate highway system. It was intended to provide a network of high strength roads allowing quick movement of troops and equipment. At the same time Eisenhower and his advisors thought that such a system would help break down regional differences and unite the country by allowing cheap, easy travel. Today the system is essentially complete, encompassing over 45,000 miles of highway, and even a cursory examination of a map of the interstate system reveals a complex web of concrete and asphalt spreading across the country.

This afternoon, however, I would like to take a glance backward in time to explore the archaeology of a 22 mile section of this system known as the Mark Clark Expressway, or I-526. The Mark Clark extends from U.S. west of Charleston across the Ashley River to I-26 and from there across the Cooper and Wando rivers to Mount Pleasant, connecting with U.S. 17 east of Charleston. I must also point out that for much of this project's development and implementation I served as the senior highway archaeologist.

It was 26 years ago when the first archaeology was conducted for this project, known then simply as the "Charleston Innerbelt Freeway." A 10-mile segment, from U.S. 17 eastwardly to Virginia Avenue, north of Charleston, was surveyed in 1975 by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology. Characteristic of survey techniques of the time almost half of the corridor was dismissed without survey and the remainder was simply walked, with the hope that disturbed ground might reveal artifacts. It is no surprise, therefore, that only three sites were encountered — representing prehistoric remains, eighteenth century plantations, and brickworks. All three were described as significant and were recommended for additional work. Only one, Green Grove Plantation, was ever examined. In 1978 salvage excavations were conducted at a small portion of the site.

Also in 1978 I began the archaeological survey for the remaining 12 miles of the Mark Clark Expressway. This included the corridor from Virginia Avenue in North Charleston southeastwardly to U.S. 17 in Mount Pleasant. Although the route to the Wando River was well established, no alignment had been selected from the area known as Longpoint to U.S. 17, so a series of four different corridors were examined. The study revealed the presence of 69 archaeological sites. Depending on the alignment, between 16 and 22 sites would be directly impacted. Of these between three and five sites were clearly eligible for inclusion on the National Register and between eight and 10 sites warranted additional investigation. The study warned that there would almost certainly be "secondary impacts" as areas adjacent to the proposed expressway were opened for development and it recommended that the study be used to develop a management plan for these threatened resources.

As a result of corridor modifications, I and my colleague Lee Tippet, now an archaeologist with the SHPO, conducted additional work on this project in late 1979. Twelve additional sites were found, but since the work had been focused on only one corridor, the total number of involved sites was reduced to 53. Nine of these sites were recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register. An additional 15 sites were recommended for additional research, including on a case-by-case basis, archival research, stabilization, or excavation. Coupled with my terrestrial work, underwater archaeologists from North Carolina discovered four significant sites in the Wando River — two ships, one concentration of artifacts, and one anchor.

This final study warned that any changes in the final alignment would potentially endanger unrecorded sites. It also warned that sites could not only be endangered by primary construction activities, or by secondary construction activities, such as staging areas or borrow pits. Of equal concern were so-called "secondary impacts." At the time I explained, "as part of the environmental assessment the impact of secondary effects, such as growth and development directly attributable to the highway project, must be considered." To that end, I recommended that the Federal Highway Administration "carefully assess the effects of induced secondary impact on the archaeological resources" and suggested one mechanism would be careful survey of large undeveloped tracts on the fringes of Mount Pleasant in order to understand the resource base. The final study also warned that without a clear understanding of where the bridge piers were to be placed, and absent hydrology studies, it was impossible to forecast the impact of the Mark Clark Bridge on the underwater sites.

Eventually data recovery funds were approved for a series of seven sites comprising the Lesene and Fairbanks plantations on Daniels Island, a tenant site on Daniels Island, and two small tenant sites in the Mount Pleasant area. These studies were carried out by colleagues at The Charleston Museum, Carolina Archaeological Services, and Garrow and Associates.

Needless to say, the Federal Highway Administration and the State Highway Department wanted to hear nothing about secondary impacts and had no intention in developing a long-range planning document exploring the impact of the Mark Clark on the area's resources. Nor was either agency interested in conducting the hydrological and engineering studies to determine the impact on the underwater sites.

Today all of this, as the saying goes, is ancient history. The highway is built and Charleston and Mount Pleasant are reaping the many benefits of this "innercircumferential expressway designed to relieve the inner city traffic congestion" as it was originally described.

But what about the archaeological resources which were not investigated? What about those sites recommended eligible for inclusion on the National Register, but situated just a little bit outside of the Mark Clark Corridor? In fact, did the survey even

cover where the highway was eventually constructed? In other words, what happens when we take a hard look backward?

Our first frightening discovery is that the highway, or at least portions, was not built in the survey corridor. Even a cursory examination reveals that the alignment between Rathall Road and Long Point Road was shifted west, outside the survey corridor. Further examination reveals that the interchange at Long Point Road, especially that portion south of Long Point, was not incorporated in the archaeological survey. Additional problems are encountered when the original U.S. 17 interchange is compared to what was eventually constructed — again there are substantial differences. So, while much of the corridor *was* surveyed, there are significant portions which *never received any archaeological investigation*. It is impossible to know what was lost, if anything, in these areas.

At least one site actually placed on the National Register, the Sanders Plantation at the end of Rat Hall Road, was to be missed by construction. Ultimately, however, the Highway Department and its contractor managed to seriously damage the site, and ultimately some salvage excavations were conducted. An ancillary site was also damaged, but did not receive any additional attention.

In addition to the Sanders Plantation, two other significant sites, one containing eighteenth and early nineteenth century plantation materials and the other late nineteenth century tenant artifacts, were probably destroyed by the movement of the Mark Clark Alignment. Neither site, however, was investigated. Finally, since no engineering or hydrology studies were conducted for the Mark Clark Wando crossing, it is impossible to determine the impact of construction on the underwater sites.

In sum, primary and secondary construction impacts exceeded what were anticipated, resulting in the loss of several additional archaeological sites, plus possible damage to others.

An even more frightening discovery was the extent of development since the Mark Clark was initially surveyed in the late 1970s. I am confident that much of this development is associated with the Mark Clark, but regardless the damage to the resource base in Mount Pleasant is staggering.

Using only a single historic source, the *Map of Charleston and its Defences* prepared in 1863, 24 large plantation sites can be identified in the general proximity of Mount Pleasant. This map tends to be fairly accurate for the location of plantation development, although it rarely provides much detailed information concerning the landscape of the specific settlement. Although there are a variety of other maps, this is a good one to use to illustrate my point.

In the mid to late 1970s, 13 of these sites or 54% were in rural areas and hence

were available for recordation and study. Six of the sites, or a quarter, were partially developed, meaning that some portions of the site had already been lost, although other portions were likely still available for study. Only four of the sites, or about 17%, had been totally destroyed by development. One of the 24, Boone Hall Plantation, was preserved.

By the mid-1990s, only one of these 24 sites, or 4% of the total resource base, was still in a rural area and available for archaeological research. Eight are partially developed and 13 are completely lost. Today two sites are preserved — Boone Hall and the Pinckney plantation.

In other words, in about 20 years Mount Pleasant's intact plantation resources have been reduced from 13 sites to only one — a decline of 92%. The number of destroyed sites has increased from four to 13 — an increase of 325%. The lost plantations include those of Sanders, Claussen, Morehead, Hall, Klipston, Gregorie, Kinloch, Lucan, Bowner, Bunner, and Hamit. Sites partially destroyed include those of Bonneau, Farrell, Remley, Venning, Hibben, Lessene, and Royall. Essentially Mount Pleasant's plantation resources have been lost. Along with them we can imagine similar losses in small plantations which aren't likely to be shown on maps, tenant sites from the late nineteenth century, and Native American sites from the last 10,000 or so years.

We might legitimately ask whether these losses to the public's heritage are mitigated to some degree by archaeological studies? Perhaps these sites have been studied and the research is available to teachers, school children, and others interested in their past. Sadly this doesn't seem to be the case.

When the on-line catalog for the Charleston Public Library is searched under Mount Pleasant — antiquities, Charleston — antiquities, and Excavation (archaeology) — Charleston County, only seven reports for the Mount Pleasant area are recovered: Chicora's Seaside survey, the three Mark Clark archaeological surveys (which included the underwater study), Chicora's study of coffin hardware from an African-American cemetery, Chicora's report on the Whitesides Plantation, and the Garrow and Associates' study of three sites on the Mark Clark Expressway.

Turning to the South Carolina State Library similar searches produced eight studies: Chicora's research at Hobcaw Plantation, Chicora's survey at Seaside, Chicora's survey of the Longpoint Development in the vicinity of the Royall Plantation, Chicora's excavations at Whitesides Plantation, Chicora's testing at the Sanders Plantation, Chicora's coffin hardware study from the Mount Pleasant cemetery, Brockington and Associates' study at the Sanders Plantation, and Garrow and Associates' study of the three Mark Clark sites.

Besides these few reports nothing else could be found in either the University of South Carolina library or at the Library of Congress.



In other words, the literature easily available to the general public on Mount Pleasant's archaeology seems to be limited to six surveys, four excavation reports, and a study on coffin hardware from an African-American cemetery. Obviously there has been a great deal of additional work — as attested to by this symposium — but that research is simply not available to the average person in South Carolina. Two reports filed with regulatory paper work at the state historic preservation office and one copy perhaps filed at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology — which has recently cut its public access by 50% — does not reasonably constitute public accessibility. And while symposia such as this are wonderful, even they are no alternative to publications in local libraries, assessable to teachers, students, and the interested.

This retrospective look at the Mark Clark, I hope, has been a eye opener, at least for the public. Unanticipated losses from construction, careless contractors, unplanned for secondary impacts, all coupled with the extraordinary growth of Mount Pleasant have caused unprecedented losses to this area's heritage. What studies have been done, it seems, are generally unavailable to the public which has ultimately paid for them. Absent accessibility we must consider even these studied sites lost to the public. Whether these are "acceptable" losses depends on the public's interest in understanding and preserving their past.

#### **Sources for Additional Reading on Mount Pleasant Archaeology Available Through Inter-Library Loan**

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